

Parents Role in Developing of Self Esteem in Children

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ABSTRACT

Self-esteem is a positive or negative orientation toward oneself. There are two essential components of healthy self-esteem; the sense of personal worth and a sense of personal competence or efficacy. These two components of self-esteem develop over a period of time with multiple experiences. People who are motivated will have high esteem, and having it indicates positive self-regard, not egotism. Negative self-esteem is related to many personal and social concerns, such as school failure, depression, social anxiety, violence, substance abuse, and chronic welfare dependency. In general, the more positive your self-esteem, the more successful you will be at dealing with life. It is important for all parents and teachers to understand how their children's self-esteem is created and developed as well as how it can be maintained. The development of self-esteem plays an important role in helping individuals to make adjustment about their self-worth and competence. The primary contributor to self-esteem changes according to the stages they are in. True self-worth is developed over a lifetime and most of us will experience many highs and lows as we journey through life. A parent's role is to help children feel loved and to teach them the skills they need to feel capable when faced with life's many challenges. Whatever the ability of the child is, the parents or the teachers must know ways to communicate and thereby build the self-esteem in the child. To steer the thoughts of their children in the right path, parents have to train them to respect individuals and not be influenced by peers' pressure or the masses. Competence builds the ego, success begets success, being loved is to give love and you command the respect of others if you have the self-esteem!

INTRODUCTION

You can't touch it, but it affects how you feel. You can't see it, but it's there when you look at yourself in the mirror. You can't hear it, but it's there every time you talk about yourself. What is this important but mysterious thing? It's your self-esteem!

In all the world, there is no one else exactly like me. There are persons who have some parts like me, but no one adds up exactly like me. Therefore, everything that comes out of me is authentically mine because I alone chose it. I own everything about me.

Educators, parents, business and government leaders agree that we need to develop individuals with healthy or high self-esteem characterized by tolerance and respect for others, individuals who accept responsibility for their actions, have integrity, take pride in their accomplishments, who are self-motivated, willing to take risks, capable of handling criticism, loving and lovable, seek the challenge and stimulation of worthwhile and demanding goals, and take command and control of their lives. In other words, we need to help foster the development of people who have healthy or authentic self-esteem because they trust their own being to be life affirming, constructive, responsible and trustworthy.

Unfortunately, efforts to convey the significance and critical nature of self-esteem have been hampered by misconceptions and confusion over what is meant by the term “self-esteem.” Some have referred to self-esteem as merely “feeling good” or having positive feelings about oneself. Others have gone so far as to equate self-esteem with egotism, arrogance, conceit, narcissism, a sense of superiority, a trait leading to violence. Such characteristics cannot be attributed to authentic, healthy self-esteem, because they are actually defensive reactions to the lack of authentic self-esteem, which is sometimes referred to as “pseudo self-esteem.”

Whether people know it or not, everyone has a self-esteem, but some have better grasps on it than others do. Most people’s self-esteem judgements are based on what they value, their beliefs or interests, and the attitudes that they have (Beane, 1993, p.6). Therefore it is impossible to escape the notion that some one doesn’t have a self-esteem. It is whatever they make it out to be, but not only do they choose their own self-esteem, but others have a big part in deciding as well.

It is important for all parents to understand how their child’s self-esteem is created and maintained as well as how it can be diminished. Simply stated, self-esteem refers to how one feels about one’s self; it’s a term that is often misused and misunderstood. Contrary to popular belief, the factors that influence self-esteem are not completely understood. Therefore, it is not known whether low self-esteem is the cause of, or product of, drug and alcohol abuse, delinquency, promiscuity, poor school performance, depression, eating disorders or other problems related to developmental difficulties. More than likely, there is a reciprocal relationship between low self-esteem and some of these problems.

WHAT IS SELF-ESTEEM?

Self-esteem generally refers to how we feel about or how we value ourselves. Self-esteem is a hypothetical construct that includes cognitive, behavioral, and affective components. Self-esteem represents an aspect of self-cognition that reflects one's perceptions about oneself. These perceptions are formed through the evaluation of one's own personal attributes and the internalization of the evaluations of others. Over the last decade, increased interest in self-esteem has been fueled by research linking high self-esteem and strong academic and social functioning in children. Conversely, low evaluations of global self-esteem appear to be associated with many personal and social concerns, such as

school failure, depression, social anxiety, violence, substance abuse, and chronic welfare dependency.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WITH HIGH SELF-ESTEEM

Most of the time, children with high self-esteem will:

- make friends easily.
- show enthusiasm for new activities.
- be cooperative and follow age-appropriate rules.
- control their behavior.
- play by themselves and with other children.
- like to be creative and have their own ideas.
- be happy, fully of energy, and talk to others without much encouragement.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WITH LOW SELF-ESTEEM

Most of the time, children with low self-esteem will say things like:

- "I can't do anything well."
- "I know I can't do it."
- "I know that I will fail."
- "I don't like me. I wish I were someone else."

Is it possible to have too much self-esteem? We don't believe that it is possible to have too much true self-esteem, for having high self-esteem is equivalent to having good health. However, it is certainly possible for individuals to have an over-inflated sense of either worth or competence. Our objective is to develop individuals with high self-esteem that is well grounded in reality and balanced between an equal sense of worth and competence-- individuals who exhibit those qualities agreed upon by educators, parents, business and government leaders as essential to effective functioning in these changing times

When parents and teachers of young children talk about the need for good self-esteem, they usually mean that children should have "good feelings" about themselves. With young children, self-esteem refers to the extent to which they expect to be accepted and valued by the adults and peers who are important to them. Self-esteem involves an individual's sense of self-worth (Beane, 1984, p.6)

Children with a healthy sense of self-esteem feel that the important adults in their lives accept them, care about them, and would go out of their way to ensure that they are safe and well. They feel that those adults would be upset if anything happened to them and would miss them if they were separated. Children with low self-esteem, on the other hand, feel that the important adults and peers in their lives do not accept them, do not care about them very much, and would not go out of their way to ensure their safety and well-being.

DEVELOPMENT

The development of self-esteem is important because it may play a mediating role in assisting an individual to adjust to environmental demands and to develop socially appropriate behaviors and self-regulations (Higgins, 1991). Positive self-affects may also foster development and mastery of various competencies, whereas negative self-conscious emotions may provoke behaviors that inhibit the individual's pursuit of life goals. A positive view of self will affect the feelings, behaviors, and thoughts of an individual child. The resulting sense of self-efficacy may assist the child in working through difficult times and applying the self-regulation necessary for personal growth.

Our self-esteem develops and evolves throughout our lives as we build an image of ourselves through our experiences with different people and activities. Experiences during our childhood play a particularly large role in the shaping of our basic self-esteem. When we were growing up, our successes (and failures) and how we were treated by the members of our immediate family, by our teachers, coaches, religious authorities, and by our peers, all contributed to the creation of our basic self-esteem.

Self-esteem is largely developed during childhood

Healthy Self-Esteem Childhood experiences that lead to healthy self-esteem include-	Low Self-Esteem Childhood experiences that lead to low self-esteem include-
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• being praised• being listened to• being spoken to respectfully• getting attention and hugs• experiencing success in sports or school• having trustworthy friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• being harshly criticized• being yelled at, or beaten• being ignored, ridiculed or teased• being expected to be "perfect" all the time• experiencing failures in sports or school <p>People with low self-esteem were often given messages that failed experiences (losing a game, getting a poor grade, etc.) were failures of their whole self</p>

1. Early Childhood

The foundations of self-esteem are laid early in life when infants develop attachments with the adults who are responsible for them. When adults readily respond to their cries and smiles, babies learn to feel loved and valued. Children come to feel loved and accepted by being loved and accepted by people they look up to. As young children learn

to trust their parents and others who care for them to satisfy their basic needs, they gradually feel wanted, valued and loved. Although self-esteem is forming it is not measurable before the age of five or six because up until this time the two functions of self-esteem, competence and worthiness, operate independently of each other.

2. Middle Childhood

Between the ages of five and eight self-esteem becomes increasingly defined. Children begin to make judgement about their self worth and competence in five areas: physical, appearance, social acceptance, scholastic ability, athletic and artistic skills and behaviour. These areas make up the child's global view of his/her self. Self-esteem emerges at this point in childhood because the child is able to initiate behaviour with competence, evaluate his or her accomplishments in terms of their worthiness and experience a process or attitude between the two. As a child's age increases so do their social contacts, life experiences and the expectations placed upon them. The child develops an increasing awareness of those things they are good at and those they are not good at. Inevitably self-esteem begins to effect behaviour as the individual attempts to maintain and protect their sense of self worth against the challenges, problems and experiences of life. Self-esteem acts as a filter through which we judge our performances. In this way it determines how we approach future tasks. As children pass through early to middle childhood, they still tend to be unrealistically positive in their self-evaluations. Their ability to compare themselves with others remains limited, but they are better able to integrate and categorize some self-perceptions. Harter (1999) noted that young children tend to think in terms of absolutes (all positive or all negative). Thus, despite the tendency to be overly positive, a child may demonstrate negative self-esteem if negative life experience has emphasized negative attributes.

During their early years, young children's self-esteem is based largely on their perceptions of how the important adults in their lives judge them. The extent to which children believe they have the characteristics valued by the important adults and peers in their lives figures greatly in the development of self-esteem. For example, in families and communities that value athletic ability highly, children who excel in athletics are likely to have a high level of self-esteem, whereas children who are less athletic or who are criticized as being physically inept or clumsy are likely to suffer from low self-esteem.

Families, communities, and ethnic and cultural groups vary in the criteria on which self-esteem is based. For example, some groups may emphasize physical appearance, and some may evaluate boys and girls differently. Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination are also factors that may contribute to low self-esteem among children.

3. Late Childhood

In middle to late childhood (8 to 11 years), children no longer think of themselves in terms of absolutes. They perceive both positive and negative aspects of their attributes and emotions. Children begin to integrate their perceptions of their attributes to form generalizations (e.g., I'm kind) (Harter, 1999). Harter noted that, at this point, children can compare themselves to their peers. At the same time, the school setting allows for more comparative judgments (Harter, 1999). With increased maturity and experience,

children also begin to perceive themselves in a more differentiated way (Garcia, Hart, & Johnson-Ray, 1997; Marsh, Smith, & Barnes, 1985; Shavelson & Bolus, 1982; Shavelson, Hubner, & Staton, 1976 as cited in Jerome), August 2002). That is, they perceive themselves to be more competent or adept in some domains than in others. The extent to which their perceptions of themselves in specific domains affect their overall sense of self-worth will be influenced by how important they perceive those domains to be (Harter, Whitesell, & Junkin, 1998). By adulthood self-esteem has changed from a mostly reactive phenomenon to one that can be consciously acted upon to either increase or decrease feelings of self worth. As adults we are confronted by many situations that affect our levels of self-esteem.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-ESTEEM

Even though self-esteem has been studied for more than 100 years, specialists and educators continue to debate its precise nature and development. Nevertheless, they generally agree that parents and other adults who are important to children play a major role in laying a solid foundation for a child's development.

Good self-esteem is important because it helps your students to hold their head high and feel proud of their accomplishments and abilities. It gives them the courage to try new challenges and the power to believe in themselves. It allows them to respect themselves – even when they make mistakes. And when they respect themselves, adults and other friends usually respect them, too.

Having good self-esteem is also the ticket to make good choices about their mind and body. If they think they're important, they'll be less likely to follow the crowd if their friends are doing something dumb or dangerous. If they have good self-esteem, they know that they are smart enough to make their own decisions. How you feel about yourself affects how you act. How children feel about themselves affects the way they act.

Success in school, getting along in a family or with peers all depend on self-confidence. Without it, children's talents may not be developed as they may be afraid to take risks or be creative. Research shows that a positive self-esteem is more important to academic success than a high IQ score. Children will have greater self-esteem if they feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for their experiences.

WHAT CAUSES A LACK OF SELF-ESTEEM?

There are a number of things that can cause a lack of self-esteem. The reason why those things come about is not something to discuss on this page, but we should be aware that these things in themselves effect self-esteem. Here are some of those things.

1. Depression

Lots of people get depressed at some point or other, for lots of different reasons. When that happens, your esteem can be hit pretty quickly because of it. Say if a teacher promises to reward the students if the project is done well. When the project is finished, he doesn't seem to do so even if the students did a pretty job on that. The kids start to

feel a little depressed when they were looking forward for that promised reward. Then they'll start to think 'the teacher doesn't like me anymore' or 'the teacher cheats me'. Depression and a lack of esteem come close to each other.

2. Insecurity

Insecurity, uncertainty, even just a lack of knowledge. When you don't feel happy about something in your surroundings and you don't know what to do about it or how to change it, the student begins to liken themselves to that sometimes. Not feeling good about, or even scared of their surroundings is not a very nice thing to face, and it sometimes makes them feel the same way about themselves if it goes on for long enough, because they get wrapped up in it so much.

3. Abuse

Abuse is something that comes in many ways – physical, mental, sexual, emotional. When the weaker students are in a vulnerable stage, those stronger ones will see that as an opportunity to take a advantage of it and abuse them. When they are abused in such way, it takes away their self respect.

4. Failure

Failing at our objectives makes us feel like we can not achieve anything we want to and because we can't achieve, it makes a feeling of being worthless and useless. While all of these experiences are normal occurrences in the path of experience, for many they can lower confidence and ultimately self-esteem.

5. Criticism

Criticism is something that we sometimes misunderstand. Sometimes teacher criticises students for something they have done, it may be just because they did something which they could have done better. But if criticism is taken the wrong way, it is like another way of saying to themselves that they failed. On the hand, self-worth and self-confidence can be damaged if we are told that we are 'not good enough' or 'below average'.

HELP YOUR CHILD GROW SELF-ESTEEM

There are a multitude of factors which can effect self-esteem but arguably none is more significant than the family. Helping your child grow up with strong self-esteem is the most important task of parenthood. As a parent, you are the primary influence on how your child feels about herself--her self-esteem. You are a mirror of who she is. And you want your child to feel valuable, to have strong self-esteem. This is not to imply that the family is the cause of an individual's level of self-esteem but rather has 'predisposing effect'.

Help children develop self-esteem by listening, accepting, and praising. Self-esteem comes from acceptance. Provide positive self-esteem for your kids. Help your children grow self-esteem. Kids with high self-esteem have an easier time in life.

In general, the more positive the parents' self-esteem, the more positive the children will be. Children will watch and copy how parents react to their successes and mistakes.

Model positive responses and strategies for dealing with these experiences. Be a **good role model**. Start by building your own self-esteem.

Taking responsibility for your own self-esteem is important too. Children learn so much by watching and imitating their parents. Talk out loud about your feeling and the ways that you can cope with life's problems. For example, a comment such as, "I'm feeling sad today because someone at work said some mean things. I think I'll take a walk after dinner to feel better," shows a child that individuals can have control over how they feel and think about themselves.

Provide your child with a sense that she is **loved and valued**. The opinion of a parent is important to most children throughout their lives, unless the parent creates a need for the child to discount the parent's opinion because it is too critical. Focus on your child's positive qualities.

Listening to your child. Choose a time when you can give your child your full attention with a minimum of distractions. Invite your child to talk by asking some open-ended questions that can't be answered by "yes" or "no." Then follow his lead. When you can not take the time to listen to your child, she feels unimportant, boring, not good enough. Low self-esteem follows.

If necessary, help a young child find words to describe his/her feelings. Don't distract yourself with details. Just listen for the point of the story and give feedback to the point. Don't try to fix things. Children usually want to share an experience, not hear a solution. Learning to solve their own problems builds self-esteem, too.

Accepting your child. When you accept all of your child, the good and the bad, your child can accept him/herself. This is the foundation of self-esteem. Train yourself to:

- Recognize his/her unique abilities and talents.
- Reinforce, nurture, and help the child see these talents.

Stop comparing your kid with other children. There will always be some people who have more than you and some who have less. If you play the comparison game, you'll run into too many "opponents" you can't defeat.

Stop putting them down. You can't develop high self-esteem if you repeat negative phrases about the kids and their abilities.

Focus only on changing behavior that is important to change, i.e. behavior that isolates or harms him/her or disrupts the family. You don't need and should not want to change everything about your child to fit your "specs." Again, your job is to make your child feel valuable and build self-esteem.

Appreciating your child. A child's self esteem will suffer if he or she is not appreciated. Children know if you are sincere or not. If you spend time together you must enjoy or

there is no point. Show appreciation at all times. Tell your child you love him or her - this is appreciation. Thanking a child when he does something good is reward enough. Children like to please.

Encouragement. Esteem is boosted with your encouragement. Encourage decision-making, this will lead to a feeling of confidence and independence.

Help your child discover activities that will allow her to compete in a healthy environment and enjoy a reasonable amount of success. Teach her to feel proud of her accomplishments and challenged when she is defeated. Do not force your child to be involved in activities in which she does not enjoy some level of success.

Praise. Self esteem comes from what we think about ourselves, praise is external. I do not agree entirely with some who say praise creates kids addicted to it and then needing praise to feel good. Encouragement is better than praise. I was often told "could do better" and this lead me to feel no matter what I did it would not be good enough to please others.

Praise without overpraising. Praise is what gives children the message that they are accepted and appreciated. They learn to praise themselves and recognize and value their own efforts and talents. On the other hand, overpraise creates pressure to be the "smartest, best, most wonderful kid ever," a set-up for eventual failure.

Avoid backhanded praise. This mixes praise and insult.

Say, *"I'm glad you got it done,"* instead of, *"It's about time."*

Try, *"You look good in blue,"* instead of, *"I'm glad you are wearing something besides all that black you and your friends like."*

Mutual respect

Children's self esteem will be higher if you treat him or her seriously and with respect. Explain to the child everything and treat him as an intelligent individual able to understand and reach conclusions. You want to be treated like this and children are no different. A child who is belittled, patronized or put down will suffer lack of confidence. Mutual respect will foster trust and confidence.

Dealing with failure

If the child fails he must not feel a failure. Teach a child failure doesn't exist only temporary setbacks on the road to success. Never tell a child he has failed, let you down or cannot succeed. Be a mentor and help the child to believe in his or her ability to succeed no matter how long it takes!

Use the Language of Self-Esteem. Language is a powerful esteem builder. In fact, it can build or destroy self-esteem. Correct children using the language of self-esteem. Use the words "decide" and "choice" often. Stress the consequences of choices. Discuss the behavior, not the child so that you distinguish between the child's worth and his/her behavior. Describing behavior gives him/her accurate feedback about actions and how

actions affect the child and others. By not labeling a child as good or bad, you separate appraisals of behavior from basic value or worth.

Share the reasons behind your reactions. It is easier for children to meet expectations and / or avoid conflict when they understand why you react the way you do. Validate your child's experience so that he/she feels seen and understood as a worthy person even when behavior is being corrected.

Discipline and set limits. Children who are not disciplined, who do not have limits, can not grow up with high self-esteem. They tend to be more dependent and feel that they have less control over their world. Kids, just like adults, are more confident when they feel they have control. Children will run into disapproval and cruelties in the world. They need the physical and emotional protection of rules and limits for self-esteem.

Use positive discipline. Children who are disciplined with only negative consequences or through negative talk may learn to behave but they often do it with a grudge against parents and with little internal self-esteem.

Gear discipline toward the age of your child. Your child at two needs a different kind of discipline that he/she will at five, ten, and fifteen years of age. In fact, each additional year of age will have you giving up control of your child's life to your child. Letting your child control his/her life in a manner suitable to age, is one more way to grow self-esteem.

In addition, school age children transfer more and more allegiance from their family to their peer group each year. By the time your child is a young teenager you will have powerful competition from the peer group. That is the way it will be, like it or not. At this point your prior discipline should lead your teenager to self-control.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-ESTEEM AND THE IMPLICATION FOR PARENTS

As a parent or a teacher, you have a great influence over the self-esteem of your children. For the first 4 or 5 years, parents are the most important contributor. When children start school, teachers and friends become important. Once they reach adolescents, peer groups begin playing a greater role in steering the child's self-esteem. The more positive their self-esteem was before adolescents, the easier it will be for them to resist negative peer group pressures.

Self-esteem is the sum and substance of one's feelings and thoughts about who we are and as such is of great importance. If I enjoy healthy self-esteem, I value rather than am threatened by that some trait in others. People with poor self-esteem end up in company of their own kind; shared fear and insecurity reinforce negative self-assessments. And if I feel lovable and deserving of respect, I treat others well and expect them to treat me well. But if I feel unlovable and undeserving of respect and I am treated poorly, I put up with it and feel it is my fate. (Branden, p.14)

Self-esteem is the foundation that we build the rest of us on. Children need challenging and meaningful activities which will encourage them to achieve their potential. Each child may well have different potential but it is equally crucial that their achievements are meaningful so as to increase their opinion of their capabilities. Self-esteem will be further enhanced if children achieve in skills which are useful and of interest to themselves.

Self-esteem, or one's sense of worth, is often fragile and sensitive to events that happen on a day-to-day basis. Children's understanding of their identities is a reflection of how other people react to them through the events that happen on a day-to-day basis: one's self concept is the image seen in a social mirror.

Self-esteem is critical for individuals to think about and be able to take advantage of strengths and for learning from mistakes (metacognition). It needs to be emphasised to children that mistakes are part of the learning process for both adults and children and not a negative experience.

Healthy self-esteem is an essential component for learning. Self-esteem in most students 'mirrors' the appraisals of others, in particular parents and teachers. Parents' views clearly affect learners' achievements. Positive appraisals over an extended time tend to increase the level of learning. Prolonged or consistent negative appraisals tend to lower learning achievement. Children tend to perform in accordance with parents' expectations and treatment.

As parents we can be instrumental in creating an environment which nurtures and supports children developing self-esteem. This can be achieved by modeling to children that mistakes are part of the learning process for both children and adults. It is important to empower and skill children to assess their achievements in a positive productive manner. This creates autonomous learners. Children need to be encouraged to develop support systems both within and outside of the home so that they feel confident to take risks in their learning.

DISCUSSIONS

You know what self-esteem is: according to decades of psychological and educational theory, it's the essential building block for a successful life. A few generations of children, especially minority kids, have been educated according to the theory that they lack self-esteem, that this deficiency is central to any problems they may have in making their way in the world and that the worst thing you can ever do to a child is to tell her that she isn't all that.

Well, guess what? New research has found that self-esteem can be just as high among D students, drunk drivers and former Presidents from Arkansas as it is among Nobel laureates, nuns and New York City fire fighters. In fact, according to research performed by Brad Bushman of Iowa State University and Roy Baumeister of Case Western Reserve University, people with high self-esteem can engage in far more antisocial

behaviour than those with low self-worth. "I think we had a great deal of optimism that high self-esteem would cause all sorts of positive consequences and that if we raised self-esteem, people would do better in life," Baumeister told the Times. "Mostly, the data have not borne that out." Racists, street thugs and school bullies all polled high on the self-esteem charts. And you can see why. If you think you're God's gift, you're particularly offended if other people don't treat you that way. So you lash out or commit crimes or cut ethical corners to reassert your pre-eminence. After all, who are your moral inferiors to suggest that you could be doing something right, or, wrong? What do they know?

CONCLUSION

Positive self-esteem is possible for everyone, but it doesn't happen overnight. True self-worth is developed over a lifetime and most of us will experience many highs and lows as we journey through life. A parent's role is to help children feel loved and to teach them the skills they need to feel capable when faced with life's many challenges. There is general agreement that the level of self-esteem of children can be enhanced when significant adults and peers treat them with respect, when there are strong feelings of trust, when their views, preferences, and opinions are considered, and where they have opportunities to make real decisions and choices about events and things that ma

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